THE ANTHRO GUIDE

May, 1985
revised 1995

In this issue

Economics
Life Cycle
Social / Political Structure
Religion
Values

Produced by
Africa Area Anthropology
Department

There are many methods one can use to go about learning another culture: participant observation, recording case studies as they happen, genealogical charting, text study, semantic analysis, surveys, biographical research, etc. Generally, a combination of methods is necessary to get the full picture. The Anthro Guide is a tool that can be helpful in stimulating your curiosity and expanding your horizons of the possible, especially when your initial curiosity has been sated. Of course, data from actual cases that take place in real behavior all around you is more reliable that data gained from interviewing, and one must be conscious of the danger of fabricated answers that are given to please the stranger, since he or she seems bent on having answers galore. Still, it is fully legitimate to augment one's observations through interviews and discussions, so that one can learn the new culture more quickly. One should also be alert to the likelihood of eliciting the 'ideal' rather than the 'real'. These should be distinguished, but neither should be overlooked. The 'ideal' offers insight into the conscience of the people, and where the 'real' falls short of the 'ideal', we have 'emic sin'. All data should be compared against real life, or confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses.

The Anthro Guide should be used as a stimulator, not a list of questions to answer. Where the questions stimulate response, let the conversation flow in whichever way it wills. There are surely other very important areas of the culture you are studying not mentioned in this guide. Where questions seem irrelevant or nonsensical, skip them.

This guide is not an original composition: it is a compilation of several sources embellished upon by numerous individuals with experience in Africa. The sources include: Jacob Loewen's "Missionaries and Anthropologists Cooperate" (Practical Anthropology 12:4 (1965):158-190), Suzanne Hargrave's Anthro Guide for the Australian Branch, Sherwood Lingenfelter's Agents of Transformation, and Thomas Headland's Value's Questionnaire. In the same way that those who shaped the oral tradition of this great continent are anonymous, many of those who have contributed ideas to the anthro guide are also anonymous, and may not even be aware of the part they played - a comment here, a question there, an article evoking curiosity to explore the same area in other cultures. Special thanks go to Jon Arensen for his support of the guide through the years and his help in editing it, to Barbara Moore who initiated its translation into French, and to Wanda Pace, who contributed an East African, single woman's perspective.

Harriet Hill

1. Economics

Economics in its broadest sense deals with the manner in which people derive a living from their environment and how the ecology affects the life style of the people. Describe how it is related to other aspects of the culture, and how changes are introduced. This area of study will be the first you notice, and will be the easiest to learn about using the language. It will also be of interest to others, so don't forget to take pictures or videos!

A. Orientation and Ecology

It will be useful to compile this information as a short introduction for any papers you will write. Include where, how, and when you carried out your research.

1. **Ethnic Identification and Language** - name and alternate names of group, names of subgroups, affiliation with other groups, population, names of language, linguistic classification, dialects, bilingualism, intercomprehension, degree of contact with others
2. **Geography** - maps, climate and seasons, topography, natural resources, flora and fauna, placement of schools, dialect areas, sous-prefectures, missions, roads, markets.
3. **Biological Factors** - physical description of people, group behavior and personality traits, population statistics (birth, death, etc.)
4. **History of Group** - significant people and events, origins, attitude towards change: resistant? accepting?
5. **Bibliography**

B. Technology

1. Subsistence

What are the limiting factors in the environment? How do these affect survival? What advantages are present in the environment?

a. Food Production

Types: indigenous, European, abundance of, types preferred. Is the diet nutritious? What food must be present for people to feel they have eaten?

Beverages: What kinds of beverages exist? Beer? Distilled liquor? How important is brewing liquor to the local economy? Is it legal? Is alcoholism a problem? What is the symbolic use of alcohol in ceremonies/rituals? What does it signify?

Crops: Who does the planting? Who does the harvesting? Is there a difference between men's and women's field? How can one assure a harvest? How can one strengthen the fertility of the seed? What acts would inhibit fertility? Is the fertility of fields and of women connected in some way? Are there divinities or ancestors protecting the crops? Is it

gifts like those they received? Can anyone hunt, or is it limited to certain clans or castes? Who can hunters marry? Are hunters considered clairvoyant? What are the risks? Are there animals which are really humans or genies in transformed states? What happens if the hunter shoots one of them? Are there rituals involved? What preparations must one make for hunting? Are there taboos on women during the hunting period of the men?

Food Preparation: How is food prepared? Is food prepared inside or outside? What utensils are used? Sketch a typical kitchen. Does each wife have her own kitchen? What items are shared? How much time does food preparation take each day? How and when does a newly married woman begin doing her own cooking? Do men ever cook food in the presence of women? What etiquette surrounds the eating process? Is food shared? How does one show that one likes the taste of food? Who eats out of the same pot? How many meals are eaten daily? Are they prepared at set times?

b. Energy Sources - What fuels are used? How are they obtained? Where? Are fuel sources abundant? What fuels are used for cooking? for warmth? for light? for making tools? Are fuels ever used for protection from spirit life?

c. Health and Hygiene - How do people bathe? How often? Where? What etiquette is associated with bathing? When do people normally sleep? How much sleep do most folks need? What practices are considered necessary to be sanitary in daily life? Do people feel latrines are hygienic or dirty?

Are people sick a lot? What illnesses are the most prevalent? Is AIDS prevalent? What causes illness? Is Western medicine accepted? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using it? What health care facilities are available in the area? Are children vaccinated? Are indigenous and Western medicines used simultaneously? Why? Are there illnesses only indigenous medicines can treat? Is illness always linked to a spiritual cause? How can a sick person know the cause of the illness? What is thought of recurring illnesses? mental illness? How are invalids treated? Are people ever left to die? babies? elderly? handicapped? crazy people? How are healers trained? Are there healers who use only herbal medicines and others who use herbal medicines and spiritual power?

d. Animals - What types of animals are used? How important are they to life and the economy? How are they used? What animals are domesticated? Which ones are considered pests or dangerous? Do some animals have mythological value? What taboos are connected with animals? Are some animals considered clairvoyant? Do animals have soul/spirits? If so, does the animal's soul survive after death like human souls? Are they included in the kinship system? Can bush spirits or people take on the form of animals? Are certain clans associated with certain animals? Why? How? What character qualities are associated with various animals in folk tales?

e. Occupations - What traditional occupations are available? agriculture? animal husbandry? hunting? fishing? What tools are used? How is the work done? How is one trained? Are there

g. Annual Cycle - What are the names of the traditional seasons? What types of work and activities take place during the different seasons? When are villagers busiest in the fields? When do celebrations take place? Are the fruits and roots seasonal? Does the availability of food determine the rhythm of life and festivities?

2. Non-subsistence

a. Housing - What types of housing are used? Sketch a floor plan and a compound. How are the houses constructed? What are the functions of houses? merely shelter for sleeping at night? Are there any houses or rooms with religious importance? Are any houses taboo to certain people? When? Why? What etiquette is expected in entering someone's compound? How important is the welcome one extends to visitors?

b. Clothing and Ornamentation - Who makes it? How is it acquired? Are husbands required to provide cloth for their wives? Does clothing or jewelry reflect marital status? Do cloth patterns have names? At what age do children begin to wear clothes? Is it the same for boys and girls? What constitutes modesty? Does it vary with age? What constitutes beauty? What is the function of personal adornment? beautification only? religious? other? What cosmetics are used? Is plumpness admired? At what age are ears pierced? Is scarification practiced? Why? How? What jewelry important to women? to men? What clothing is worn for the various rituals and celebrations?

c. Arts and Crafts - What types of arts are done? What instruments and materials are used? How are they obtained? What are the functions of: decoration? religious? totemic? Are the artists specialists? Do different groups have particular designs that belong to them? Are children being taught art forms? What kinds of music are used? Instruments? Dances? Drums? Does music play a central role in the society or is it on the periphery? Do Western tunes have a place in the culture? How do people feel about Western vs. traditional music? How is music used in daily life?

d. Transportation - What means of transportation are available to people? What is the degree of mobility? Who travels? Men only? How much traveling and visiting goes on between villages? For what reasons do people travel?

e. Communication - How are meetings signaled? How does information flow? Griot? Chef? Informally? Is information usually accurate or distorted? Does being agreeable and informative have a higher value than being truthful? What do people gossip about? What is done with information coming from outside the group, i.e. gov. officials? Do people listen to the radio? read? tell folk tales? Is there a secret language or system of codes? What subjects are improper to talk about? How is truth communicated? In music? In meetings? One on one? In secret?

C. Economic Process

1. Wealth and its distribution

borrow things? money? Do they intend to repay/return borrowed items? Is it up to the loaner to retrieve his possessions? If a borrowed item is ruined or lost, what happens?

b. Exchange - What is exchanged? Is there a direction to the flow of goods? What groups are involved in exchange? What individuals within the group? Is a social hierarchy respected in the exchange process? Is exchange competitive? Does it follow predictable patterns? Is there any traditional money? Is it currently in use? Is generosity admired? Expected? or are people expected to look out for themselves? How do wealthy people act? Is repayment always in cash? Do patron-client relations exist? Is asking humiliating and avoided, or are people aggressive in asking for things? Are debt relationships desired? Is money invested in personal projects, or to bring honor to the village? Is exchange done in public or private? Are negotiations done in public or private?

c. Gift-giving - Is there a recognized pattern to the giving, e.g. between certain relationships? At what times of year are gifts given? What are appropriate gifts? Where are gifts given? At recipient's compound? At giver's compound? Either place? What etiquette surrounds gift giving? Are gifts given in public or in private? Is there an obligation to give when asked? When an object is admired, is the owner expected to give it to the admirer? What are the effects of gifts? Is a debt relationship established? Does a person increase in status by giving generously? What are the effects, reactions, results if expected gifts are not given? Is gratitude expressed? How? Is a person obliged to accept all gifts? Is there a way to politely refuse a gift? What does accepting or giving a gift communicate?

2. Labor

a. Division of Labor - What is the basis for the division of labor? (age, sex, status) Who does what and why? Are work projects initiated by the group or by individuals? Do areas of specialization exist or is each family an entity to itself? How do ecological conditions or social roles affect the division of labor? Who controls a woman's labor: husband? father? in-laws? herself? Are voluntary work groups organized? For what occasions (i.e. building a house)? How does one call a working group for help? How is the group renumerated? What is the host expected to provide? Is work scheduled by routines or as the need arises?

b. Wages and Salaries - How are workers paid? in money? in exchange? individually? in groups? Do wages include room and board? How are church workers paid? How are friends paid? Are advances in salaries the norm? Is the employer expected to care for employee's illnesses? illnesses in his family? severance pay? funeral obligations? Are bonuses expected? vacations? What daily schedules are customary? What is the boss/employee relationship like? Good friends? A social distance between them? How is productivity measured? by time or effort expended? by goals attained? Are people motivated by increasing their status or role in the society or by hope of personal profit? Is work and recreation co-mingled or strictly separated? Are ritual or symbolic meals a part of the work environment? What do they accomplish? Are there group celebrations as rewards? or individual celebrations or reward? How does a person fire or sack an employee?

How does bilingualism affect you? Will you pretend you don't know the language of wider communication, or use it while learning the language? How does the degree of bilingualism affect literacy?

How does the people's attitude toward change affect your strategy?

How would it be best to treat health problems in your area? Western medicine? Prayer? Both? Send folks to the hospital? Are some herbal treatments effective? To what degree do you want to become involved in health work?

What times of the day/year will people be available to you for interaction, literacy, and translation checking?

Do African guests feel at home in your house? Is it comfortable enough for you to cope with?

How important is it to eat their food? Is there a way to show your acceptance by taking a token amount, without consuming great quantities? Do villagers enjoy eating certain types of your food? How important is it for you to share it? How can you maintain enough privacy to survive as an individual or family, and yet not cause offense?

What kinds of clothing would be distracting to villagers? What is their attitude toward you wearing their clothes?

Can you encourage indigenous music by mimicking their tunes? Could you exchange a Western song for a traditional one?

Considering the degree of mobility, can you expect people to come to you, or must you go to them (for literacy, etc.)?

How can you use the existing lines of communication to disseminate information?

When should you give gifts? What level of giving would be appropriate to your role? Are you perceived as rich or poor? How can you be generous without upsetting the system?

Who might be available to work for you? What kind of working relationship are you going to set up with your workers? Will you employ people directly? Through a third party? What type of care will you provide for your workers? and their families?

If communal work projects are the norm, how will this affect your strategy? If you organized community involvement of a project, what would be your responsibilities: providing food? drink?

What role do villagers assign to you? What expectations go with that role? Do they expect you to be just like them, or do they have a separate category for you? To what degree do you want to participate in village life? What role do you want to establish for yourself? Will you be able to handle this role over the long term? If you have children, will they be able to handle it?

Are there any work roles/ relationships which would be offensive or strange, given your sex and age? How will your sex and age affect your working relationships?

2. Life Cycle

A society, to maintain its existence, must impart to all new members its prescribed patterns of behavior, its ideology and values and, in short, all aspects which constitute its unique system of living. In order to accomplish this each society has established prescribed methods for such socialization. Related to these processes and the various stages of the life cycle are numerous associated beliefs which give insight into the whole of the people's world view. The following questions will aid you in becoming familiar with the methods of socialization as well as the various associated beliefs.

A. Life Cycle

1. Conception and Birth

How does a woman become pregnant? Why are some women sterile? What can be done to increase fertility? Is a sterile woman at a social disadvantage?

What can be done to prevent pregnancy? Medicine? Magic? Abstinence? Is abortion practiced? Who performs it? Why would a woman want to abort a baby? Is there an older woman in the village who watches over the expectant mother during pregnancy?

Where does a baby come from? Does its body have a different origin from its soul or spirit? What does the father contribute? the mother? Is there reincarnation of the spirit? How is the sexual act related to conception? At what point does the spirit enter the body?

Where does the baby get its name? Who names it? When? Does he or she receive more than one name? Are some names kept secret? Is power inherited with a name? Are babies that resemble ancestors thought to be reincarnations of ancestors and named after them? Are derogatory names ever used to fool malicious spirits? Are there prescribed names? Day names? Order of birth? (second, ninth, etc.) Twins? Baby after twins?

Do women prefer to deliver in the village or in a hospital? Why? Who performs village deliveries? Are confessions of adultery necessary for an easy delivery? Who is present at a delivery? How is the umbilical cord cut? What is done with the afterbirth? Why is the top of the baby's head soft at birth? Why are babies born in different positions?

How does one get twins? Are both permitted to live? Are they considered to have special powers? Are they a good omen? Do they have any special ceremonies throughout life? Is there a 'twins association'?

When does the mother resume fieldwork and housework? Is there a special coming-out ceremony?

When is a baby most susceptible to evil spirits? What is done to protect the child?

Why are some children born with birth defects? What can be done?

2. Weaning / Toilet training

How is a child weaned? At what age? What kind of taboos does a pregnant/nursing mother have to observe? Can she have sexual relations? Can sperm affect the milk or the nursing baby? If sexual relations are not permitted, how does the husband cope?

How is toilet training taught? Is it consciously taught? Is urine considered to be dirty? Are enemas used to regulate babies' bowel movements? Are children lectured about toilet training? Punished? Who teaches them?

3. Children

With whom does a child have the most intimate relationship? Father? Mother? Grandma? Brothers? What is expected from children? At what age is a child responsible for himself? What is viewed as children's work? Who is in control in the parent/child relationship? Does the mother protect the children from the father?

What kinds of behavior and ideals are taught to children? Who teaches them? How? Are they ever praised? How? Are children disciplined by fear? Fear of what? bush spirits? white people? Are they given empty promises in order to placate them? Is there the expectation of controlling the child's behavior? Is behavior attributed to fate? At what age do children begin school? Do all children attend school?

How do children amuse themselves? Is it normal for children to engage in sexual play? At what age do girls begin having responsibilities in the family? Boys?

4. Youth

How does a young girl or boy become an adult? Is there any initiation ceremony? How important is this ceremony? Does everyone do it? What types of symbolism is used? Is there a secret and public part of the ceremony? Is it a group ceremony or individual? Is the ceremony linked to marriage or beginning of sexual relations? What kinds of things are taught during the ceremony? What symbols are used? Is circumcision/excision performed at this time?

What expectations do villagers have of young people? What are the problems that young people face? What influences do they have at school? Who pays for schooling costs? Fees? Room and board? Are obligations to kin incurred? How and when are they repaid? What is the living situation of students in towns? Who watches over students in towns? Is pre-marital pregnancy a problem? Do teachers expect sexual favors from young ladies in exchange for grades? How do young people feel about village life? city life? What is their attitude towards their elders? What are their goals?

5. Marriage

Is marriage an individual or group affair? Are there culturally defined preferences for choice of partner? Who makes the choice of partner? What if a chosen partner is rejected? Is there any oral tradition that reinforces marriage ideals? What if a spouse chooses someone the family doesn't approve of?

Divorce - Who has the right to demand a divorce? Spouses only? Spouse's family? The church? Is divorce common? Is it the norm? Is it traumatic? What are the reasons for which people divorce? What ceremonies surround divorce? What arrangements are made for the children? properties? etc.?

Polygamy - How common is polygamy? Is it considered to be a good thing? Does it involve mainly older people? Younger? Both? Villagers and/or city folk? For what reasons is it practiced? If it is waning in popularity, why? How are the needs once met by polygamy now met? What arrangements are made for cooking, sleeping, etc.? What are typical problems of polygamous families? How do co-wives relate to each other?

Singles - Are there any unmarried women over 30? 40? Do they still consider marriage a possibility? Are they educated? What bride price would they require? How are they viewed by others? Are they encouraged to have children? Where or with whom do they live? How do they support themselves?

6. Old Age

What is the attitude toward old people? Are they honored? Are they considered wise? Do they have authority? Do they give counsel? Do they teach sex education? Do grandparents have responsibility for grandchildren? What responsibilities do old people have? In child training? In the compound? In festivities? Do some old people tell stories? Are old people ever dangerous to children? How does one show respect to an elder?

Why do women stop menstruating? How does this affect their role in society? When do sexual relations stop? For men? For women?

What are the problems old people face? Who takes care of them financially? If they're invalid, who cares for them? Does the family ever decide to stop treating a sick old person so he'll die?

7. Death and Burial

Is death ever due to natural causes? In cases of unnatural death, how is the cause of death determined? If a person is accused of killing by sorcery, is he/she punished? How? Would an accusation of sorcery ever be denied? If not, why not?

At what point does the soul/ spirit leave the body? Where does it go? Is it dangerous to the living? How can one protect oneself from it? How long does the soul linger in the area? Can he ever reappear as a person or ghost?

What ceremonies accompany death? When and how many wakes are held? Does it depend on the importance of the person? Who attends? Why do they attend? Who provides the food and drinks? Are kin obliged to contribute specified amounts of money or food? Do friends or age-mates have a special role in the funeral? Are children given a traditional burial and wake? Are people killed by lightening or other unusual deaths given a proper funeral?

How important is a proper funeral to the family? Why? If a church is in the area, does it ever refuse to

B. Etiquette

What is considered rude behavior? What is considered courteous? Have you noticed behavior acceptable in your home culture but not acceptable in your new situation? Vice versa?

When do you say thank-you? How is gratefulness expressed?

Is it okay to look a person in the eye while talking? How far should you stand or sit when talking? How is seating arranged?

What gestures are considered inappropriate?

Are there areas of a compound or house that are considered private? Is it improper for a woman to invite a man into her house?

How does a person show respect?

What customs seem to stand out as particularly important? What kinds of behavior are taught to children? In initiation ceremonies?

Is there a recognized hierarchy of social roles, or can you chat with anyone? How does one respectfully address others? Are there polite and familiar forms? What subjects can be discussed openly? What subjects are sensitive?

Is it acceptable to brag about one's accomplishments? Is bluntness acceptable? Do folks skirt a subject leaving you to deduce the need rather than making a request directly?

How are visitors received? Do you have to talk while visiting? Can guests be left to entertain themselves? How do sick people receive visitors? Is a gift expected when you visit? Is food/ drink offered? Are meals shared with unexpected guests? Do women eat with men? What etiquette surrounds eating? How often do you have to ask or invite for a request to be considered genuine? How do guests leave? Do they stay until released to go? Is there a parting blessing?

When returning from a trip, should you first greet your neighbors? Should they greet you?

C. Applications

How does your knowledge of the culture's socialization process help you in your relationship with the people? How does the socialization process compare with the Bible (not Western culture)? What practices are in agreement with the Bible? What practices are non-Western, but still not unbiblical? What practices are unbiblical? What Scriptures address them? How can you best present the Gospel?

Can you use the traditional methods used in communication and teaching skills to communicate the Gospel? to train employees? in literacy classes?

How will you present the Gospel with respect to reincarnation? What does the fact that God has a son mean to them? How will they understand the birth of Jesus? How will they understand his return from the grave?

How would the Bible's teaching on marriage apply to your situation? If there is a church, what does it say about polygamy? adultery? prostitution? How are you going to approach the issue?

How is family planning viewed?

What is the government's view on circumcision? excision? What is the church's view?

Is AIDS a significant problem in the community? How is it passed? Is there an awareness of it? Any prevention?

Are there marriages in the Bible that would be incestuous according to the culture?

Will biblical genealogies appeal to the people?

How do people feel about your level of knowledge of their customs? Do you know about practices not normally shared with outsiders? Might they feel exploited? How can you continue to gain insights without being offensive?

How will your participation or lack of it at funerals be understood? Is there a way to participate and pay your respects without staying for the entire process?

Are your efforts at good behavior making up for your social blunders? Do people see you trying? Do you present requests and issues in a culturally appropriate way? Can you accept the people's way of showing you honor and respect without being bothered? Do you have a cultural broker? Will he or she let you know when your behavior is offensive?

3. Social/Political Structure

What is in focus here is how the society organizes and governs itself. The structure of the family and relationships within the kin group will uncover much of the interpersonal behavior and interaction that occurs.

A. Kinship Organization

1. Kin terms

Make charts of kin terms, using both male and female egos. Include blood relatives and in-laws. Indicate terms of reference and address. (See example in Appendix A.)

Demographic studies: (This will give you a rich field of information of real life events and relationships, against which to compare the 'ideal'. It will also help you remember people's names!) Record the kin relationships of individuals. Keep a separate record (one sheet, if done by hand) for each person in your community. Include information significant in the culture, such as:

Name:	Sex	Deceased?	Cause	
Compound:				
Mother's name?		Deceased?	Cause	
Name of matriclan				
Father's name		Deceased	Cause	
Name of patriclan				
Place of birth				
Residence				
Age Class				
Religion				
Education				
Occupation	-			
First spouse's name				
	Origin			
	Patriclan			
	Matriclan			
	Divorced?			Deceased?
	Children?			

Repeat for successive spouses

2. Role Relations

Define the role of each member of the kin group. For example, what are the rights and duties of a

How is family authority enforced? Are roles highly structured, or is there a range of acceptable behavior? Is authority enforced by rules? by appeal to the group goals?

3. Clans: Matriclan, Patriclan

Does a child belong to his matriclan or patriclan? Or both? How is descent reckoned? What does one inherit anything from the matriclan? the patriclan? What does each provide? How is the matriclan /patriclan referred to? Does it have a religious function? Are there maternal/ paternal ancestors that require worship? Are things owned by the nuclear family or the clan? Do clans have names and/or symbols associated with them? Totemic animals? Myths? When traveling to an unfamiliar village, would one ask for his matriclan? patriclan?

4. Kindred (most likely not relevant)

Do children belong to both parent's families equally? Is it ego-centered rather than ancestor-centered? Is property owned by the nuclear family? Is the nuclear family free to act independently, free from obligations to the extended family? Is kinship focused on the nuclear family?

5. Adoption and Orphans

Does adoption exist? Are adopted children considered to be blood relatives? What rights do adopted children have? Are certain children given up for adoption due to animistic beliefs? the 10th child? twins? children who are always sick? Who gives the name to an adopted child? Is there ever a symbolic adoption to fool spirits? Do illegitimate children have adoptive fathers?

Are there any orphans? How are orphans cared for? Is adoption permanent or temporary?

6. Household

Who lives together? Who 'eats from the same pot'? How many generations? Is there a leader of the compound? What are his rights and obligations? Does the composition of a household fluctuate? Where should a couple live after marriage? Are there exceptions? What is the basic lay-out of a compound?

7. Behavior Toward Non-relatives

What roles are assigned to outsiders? What behavior is expected toward each role? Are outsiders looked after by their 'hosts'? Are they expected to learn the language? Are they ever adopted into the group? How?

B. Voluntary Associations

1. Friendships

What are the expectations and responsibilities of friends? Who can be friends? Only those of same age group? Only those of same sex? Is friendship generally between equals or between people of different social status (patron/client)? Who can initiate a friendship? How is it done? Are there

Symbols? Are there culturally-recognized groups that are not terminologically indicated? Is there a hierarchical ranking of groups? What kind of interaction is there between groups? How important are voluntary organizations in the society?

Do members of the ethnic group displaced, for example in cities, organize themselves together? For what purpose? Do they assist the rural communities? Do they help each other survive in their new context?

If there are age classes, how are they organized? What is the function of each class? How are new members admitted? Are there rituals associated with the age class system?

3. Societal Groups

Is the society polyethnic, i.e. made up of several ethnic groups? How do they inter-relate? Are group boundaries clearly delineated, or nebulous? Who has more status? Who has the most wealth? Who is on the bottom of the social scale? How are differences manifested?

Is there a fixed social hierarchy? What criteria are used to rank social classes? Are class boundaries clearly delineated, or nebulous? Can people change their social class? How? Are the social classes frozen into castes? Within the ethnic group? Within the society? What do higher castes have that the lower ones don't? Are there slaves? How were they procured? How are they treated? Can they ever become full members of the group?

C. Political Structure

1. Levels of government and authorities

a. Traditional System

Who is in control of a compound? a village? region? entire ethnic group? How is power passed on? Voted on? Inherited? If inherited, are there exceptions in cases of incompetency? Are people relating to each other in multiple roles?

How do the different levels of authority interact? Who makes decisions? Are decisions made by consensus? by majority? by decision of leaders? with counselors? by individuals independently? Who are the opinion leaders? How are negotiations and deliberations carried out? (Keep a record of case studies on how particular decisions were made in the community.)

What is the ideal leader like? A representative of the people? A dictator type? Are there religious leaders? Do women have any authority? How do leaders gain power? Through generosity?

Is the system hierarchical or egalitarian? Is power centralized in an on-going leadership structure that delegates? Or is power granted by individuals situationally for specific time periods (war, crisis) and then disbands? How much power do leaders have? Do people use formal channels to resolve problems or does each person work out their own solutions, case by case? Are rules codified? Do people submit to the authority structure without question? Or

2. Social Control

a. Violations

What is the local list of public and private violations? Which violations are seen as most serious? unimportant? Most common at the moment? How do people define disruptive behavior? Morality? When and why do people feel offended, unfairly treated, or exploited? What makes them seek revenge? What do they think is fair? What sorts of offenses do they believe cause illness or injurious accidents? What do people condemn others for? Who is considered deviant by most people? Why? What is done about them? What behavior is tolerated, but not ideal?

b. Control

What punishments are used against the various types of wrongs you have listed? Are wrong acts wrong only when they're discovered by the community? How important is shame as a social control? How is guilt determined? Ordeals? Mediums? Street meetings? How is punishment determined? Does punishment vary with each case, or are there standard penalties? Are the rules codified? How effective are the punishments in controlling disruptive behavior? Are there certain periods of license when certain types of usually condemned behavior is allowed? What is the rationale for this? What are the positive sanctions used to encourage people to follow ideal behavior?

3. Conflicts

a. Interpersonal Conflict

What kinds of things do people quarrel about? Between women? between men? between children? Between villages? How are problems made known? Screaming insults? Third party mediation? Song? Is a lot brushed under the carpet? or are issues dealt with openly? Is confrontation avoided? Is physical force often used? Spiritual force? Who is called upon to resolve the conflict? How is resolution achieved? Is anything used to symbolize the resolution? Drinking of alcohol? Salt? A gift from guilty party? What is done when one party refuses to speak or cooperate? Is the church ever involved? If so, how?

b. War

How were wars fought in the past? Who was permitted to go to war? When was it proper to fight? How could one identify the time? What preparations did the warrior make? Was it necessary to abstain from sex relations? With whom did they fight? For what reasons did they fight? Were prisoners taken? Were they ever used as slaves? Was there any cannibalism? Were captured women and children ever adopted into the tribe? What kinds of weapons were used for war? Did the weapons have to be dedicated? Who made them? Were there any deities or spirits of war? Did warriors confer with religious specialists before going to battle? How was the religious specialist regarded after a successful battle? Was there a special war cry? dance? Do the people still fight wars? If not, when did they stop? For what reason?

D. Applications

This information about the social/political structure will serve as the basis for community work. Programs will likely be much more successful if you can make use of existing structures rather than introduce foreign ones.

How will the soc/pol structure affect your literacy strategy? Do you want a community-based literacy program or a church-based one? What percentage of the population could be reached by each kind? Can you use any existing clubs or associations as vehicles for literacy programs? How can you contact any clubs of your ethnic group in the big cities? What ways could they help your project? Could they give it prestige?

How does your leadership style compare with the people's concept of a good leader? Are there ways you could improve your style?

Who would be a respected person(s) to work with in presenting all your 'new ideas'? How will you go about getting permission or approval for your various projects? (house building, literacy, etc.) How can you go about getting their input and ideas?

Who in your village/compound should you treat with special respect? Knowing who are the influential decision makers in your village, and in the entire ethnic group, how can you go about cultivating a relationship with them?

What do people expect out of you as their 'friend'? What can you expect from them?

How will you go about solving conflicts with the people?

How do you fit into the picture of relationships between the villagers and the national authorities? Are you seen as a buffer? How do pressures from the national government affect motivation for literacy and attitudes toward language?

Knowing the local soc/pol organization, what forms would you expect the indigenous church to take? Where do you think its leadership would come from?

What components of meaning do kin terms like mother, father, etc. carry with them? How will this affect use of these terms in the translation? What terms for political authorities match those used in the Bible? How do inheritance practices compare with Biblical ones? Will some explanations be needed?

In what areas in the Holy Spirit already convicting people about sin, where their behavior falls short of their ideals? What things are not points of conviction but are in conflict with the Bible? What aspects of the culture are compatible with Christian faith, but possibly galling to you?

4. Religion

1. God

Is there a belief in a high God?

What does the name for God mean? May the word be used with other meanings? May his name be freely used? When may it not be used? Why? Does God have many names?

What is his origin?

What are the characteristics of this god? Is he moral? Immoral? Amoral? Is he omnipresent? Is he eternal?

Has he made the world? Has he made men? Animals? When? Does he work as creator even today?

What is his relationship to his creation? Does he have a direct relationship? Or through the medium of the spirits? Or through human media? Is he near to people? Has he ever withdrawn from men? Why?

Is he governing the universe even today? Is he concerned about his creation and men? Is he kindly disposed toward man? How does he show this?

What kind of gifts can one make to him? What kind of gifts does he give?

Does he judge men? Does he judge only the living? Does he also judge the dead? By what standards does he judge? Over which sins is he most annoyed? Why?

Are his judgments always moral? Can he be bribed? Does he often act in anger? How can one placate his anger? Through sacrifice? Prayer? Ceremonies? Confession of sin? Repentance? Payment?

Does he also punish? How does he punish? Has he ever sent a flood or a fire to punish mankind?

Can a man communicate with his god? How? Through prayer? Certain ceremonies? Dreams? Visions? Talking? Through the intermediacy of other persons or spirits?

What image of god is found in folk tales? How does this relate to the god of the real world?

Are there lesser divinities? Where did they come from? How do they relate to other nature or ancestor spirit beings?

2. The Universe

From where does this world come? When was it made? Who made it?

Do the clans have any relationship with special animals or birds? Do individuals? Did they descend from these animals? What is the relationship with these animals today?

3. The Spirit World

What types of spirits are there? Do people have personal guardian spirits? What are they like?

Where do spirits live? Are certain places recognized as the habitation of the spirits?

What kinds of objects can be possessed by a spirit?

Can the spirit enter and leave bodies at will? May a spirit move about apart from a body?

Are spirits moral? Amoral? Evil? Is there a chief of the evil spirits? What is he like? Are there spirits who only do good?

Can the spirit be controlled by men? What kind of men? By what means is this control exercised? Through magic? Special words? Ceremonies? Rituals? Sacrifices? Prayer? Through other spirits? How can a spirit be reconciled? Can one have a spirit help to do harm? How does a person or medium come into relationship with the spirit world? Do religious specialists only have contact with the spirit world, or do non-specialists as well? When in relationship with the spirit world, must the medium deal with related spirits? Can one feel the presence of spirits? How does one feel it? Are there ever tests of spiritual power?

Can a spirit do both good and evil? Does he play pranks on people? Does he try to scare people? Torture people? Is the spirit favorable to men? Does he ever attack people? How does such an attack take place? Does he invade man through sickness? Through death? Does he come from without through misfortune? Through other people? Through other objects?

Why does a spirit do harm to man? Why does a spirit do kind things to man?

How does the spirit get entrance into the human body? How does the spirit leave the body? Can he be made to leave the body? Can he be recalled? How does one know the presence of a spirit in the body?

Do spirits also inhabit animals? Are there some animals who are actually spirits?

4. The Human Soul and Ancestor Spirits

What are the basic parts of man? Is there a power force? Different types of souls? Individual soul? Ancestor soul? Transcendent soul? 'Breath'? Shadow? A subconscious? What is the function of these individual parts? What remains after the death of the body?

With what does a man feel if he does wrong? What is the seat of the emotion?

Does the spirit or soul live in a special part of the body? In some organ?

Do animals have a similar nonphysical aspect about them? If human souls and animal souls are different, to what degree are they different? Can animal and human souls be interchanged? Under what conditions? Can such changes be only temporary, for a night?

What wanders about when man dreams, his soul or spirit? Can the soul or spirit leave the body during illness? in fever? Can one lose his soul or spirit? How does this happen? Can the soul be stolen? How? What can be done about it?

Do all people who die become ancestors? If not, who? Does the funeral ceremony affect the destiny of the deceased's spirit? If a person dies outside the language group area, what happens to his spirit?

Do ancestors serve as role models for the community?

5. Witchcraft

What is the origin of witchcraft? Do people voluntarily seek out the power of witchcraft or is it forced on them? Are witches conscious of their activities, or do they do it while they're sleeping? What propels them to commit anti-social acts? Is sorcery inherited? How? Can it be learned? If someone is accused of witchcraft, can he deny it, or is he obliged to admit guilt, even if he was not conscious of doing it?

Does the community know who are witches? How is this determined? Are twins automatically witches? Are witches avoided or ostracized? Are they punished?

Can witches attack those outside their kin group? How do witches work? How do you know if someone has attacked you by witchcraft? Can anything be done to remedy the situation? How can you protect yourself from witchcraft? Does natural death exist, or is death always the result of spiritual attacks such as witchcraft?

What is the relationship between the witchcraft and bush spirits? between the witchcraft and ancestors? between mediums (fetishers) and witches?

Is there white and black witchcraft? Do some people use the power of witchcraft to help/protect their families?

6. Taboo

The term 'taboo' should be limited to describing a prohibition resting on some magico-religious sanction, infringement of which brings punishment automatically.

Are there any deeds considered taboo such as relationships with strangers? Eating and drinking certain things? Leaving food uneaten?

Are there taboo persons? Chiefs? Kings? Mourners? Menstruous women? Women after childbirth? Warriors returning from battle? Successful hunters, fishermen, etc.?

Are there any taboo objects? Sharp weapons? Blood? Sputum? Trees? Rivers? Lakes? Mountains? Ceremonial objects? Animals? Certain persons? Numbers?

Are there any taboo words or names, such as the names of the dead? Special words used by the shaman? Names of God? Of other deities and spirits?

How did they come under this taboo? By the command of God? Special use in ceremonial activities? Because an object is possessed by a god or a spirit? Through some supernatural experience or vision? Through certain inherent powers that it has? Because of contact with certain taboo objects or persons?

Is the taboo for only a limited period of time? Does it last forever? If it is temporary, how long does it last? Why does it last that long? Under what conditions must a taboo be renewed? Can a taboo become weaker?

7. Current Religious Practices

Are there Christians in the group? How did Christianity arrive? When? What is the current situation of the church(es)? What percentage of the population are Christian?

Is the church composed of respected leaders of the society?

How has Christianity changed traditional beliefs and practices? How has the traditional worldview affected the perception of Christianity?

Is traditional music used in worship?

How do Christians relate to non-Christians?

What are the goals of the church?

How are decisions made in the church?

What is the church's attitude toward vernacular Scriptures? Towards literacy? How could literacy help local churches?

What missions work in the area? What is their history?

Are their other religious groups? Islam? What is their impact on the culture?

Application

In what ways is the traditional conception of spiritual reality congruous with the biblical message? In what areas might their worldview distort the biblical message? How can Christ be presented in a relevant way? Is Christianity the fulfillment of the traditional system? What Scriptures might be important to translate first? What emic sins are also sins in Scripture? How can you use their conscience as an ally in their spiritual growth?

What key biblical terms have you found equivalents for in their spirit world? For what key terms are there no equivalents?

How can you best work with the local church structure(s)? Who will be important to contact? Do you want to start literacy within the church or within the secular community?

What traditional customs can be used in a Christian context? What customs will need to be modified or replaced? What are the functions of these customs? What substitute could meet these same functions?

Will literacy be perceived of as a threat to the existing leaders of the church?

What customs and beliefs are compatible with the Christian faith, though possibly galling to you?

5. Values

The study of values is an attempt to find the major themes of the culture, upon which all else hangs. Since people often cannot verbalize their values, discovering the values of the society in which you work will take a great deal of understanding of the people and reflection. Different methods can be used to uncover the values of a group.

A. Ways to Discover Values and Themes

Know your own values

Analyze traditional literature

Study symbols and rituals

Learn the language and the categories it uses

Look for similarities through a wide range of behavior

Infer assumptions from practices and beliefs

B. Values Questionnaire

The following questionnaire can also help in discovering values. It should be administered to approx. 15 people of differing ages, sexes, and social standing in order to have an overall view of how the community as a whole thinks. It is essential to get a representative sample. Think about the questions that would be appropriate for your community, and adapt the questionnaire accordingly. By reflecting on the answers people give, you can begin to infer the underlying values.

The first set of questions are more general, and may be more appropriate for some communities. The second set are more personal, and should only be used where this sort of probing is appropriate to the relationship and situation.

First Set

What are the three most important things in the world to you?

What kind of person is considered to be a good person?

What kind of person is considered to be a bad person?

What may people praise child for?

What may people scold your child for?

Describe the most highly respected person that you know.

What brings prestige among your people?

What characteristics do men look for when choosing a wife?

Do you know anyone who has ever committed suicide? Why did he/she do it?

Do you know anyone who committed murder? If so, why did they do it?

If God sent you an angel telling you that he would grant you three requests, what would you ask for?

Why is it good to know how to read (your language)?

Second Set

Tell me your saddest experience.

What is the luckiest experience you have ever had?

What is the unluckiest experience you have ever had?

Who is the luckiest you know? Why?

What is your greatest fear? What else? Why?

When have you been most ashamed?

Tell me of a time when you were angrier than you have ever been before.

Did you choose your wife/husband yourself? Why did you choose him/her?

C. Application

This study no doubt will help you gain a great deal of insight into the rationale of day-to-day behavior. Are there any types of behavior which previously seemed illogical to you that you now understand?

What themes are important to the people? How can the gospel relate to these themes? Where do they fall short of their own ideals (emic sin)? What are their felt needs? What would be the most refreshing aspect of the "good news" to them?

How does their conception of a good person affect your behavior? Are there ways you can improve your image in the community?